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SUBJECT: FANS' BEHAVIOR AT CONCERT ANGERS CROATIA'S JEWISH
COMMUNITY

(U) Sensitive but unclassified; please handle accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Nationalist domestic pop star Marko Perkovic (aka - Thompson) was again in the spotlight following a June 17th concert in Zagreb's Maksimir stadium. With an estimated attendance of 50,000 people, the controversial performer refrained from making his earlier pro-Ustashe references and Hitler-style salutes; however some of his young fans did not. Fans were seen wearing Ustashe apparel, chanting Ustashe songs and slogans, and displaying outlawed Ustashe symbols. We agree with our interlocutors here that the behavior of the audience, unacceptable as it was, represented not a resurgence of fascism but the presence of a substantial cadre of disaffected youth who have little understanding of the Ustashe period. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

¶2. (SBU) The politically active Jewish Community of Zagreb reacted expressing their outrage over the behavior of the fans and criticized the limited response of Croatian authorities towards the display of banned symbols at the concert. Criticism was also expressed by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and leaders of The Association of Anti-Fascist Fighters and Croatian Anti-Fascists. A key concern was the lack of police efforts to detect and prevent the use of Ustashe insignia by the audience.

¶3. (SBU) On Tuesday, June 19, the GoC issued a statement rejecting the display of insignia and salutes from the World War Two Ustashe regime: "Contemporary Croatia rests on the values of anti-fascism and resistance to all forms of totalitarianism. The government calls on all components of Croatian society, notably those with influence on youth, to nurture and promote the values on which contemporary Europe rests." President Mesic, in a separate statement, further added that people who use the Ustashe salute "Za Dom Spretni" and glorify the Independent State of Croatia are clearly headed in the wrong direction.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador discussed the concert with Dr. Ivo Goldstein, President of the Bet Israel Jewish community, Shmuel Meirom, the Israeli Ambassador to Croatia, and Dragan Primorac, the Croatian Minister of Science, Education and Sport. All were concerned by any use of Ustashe symbols, but attributed the misbehavior to a relatively small number of young fans, rather than to a broader societal problem. Goldstein said it was important to differentiate Thompson, who had not used Ustashe symbols at the concert, from his fans. Meirom noted that while any display of Ustashe paraphernalia was an issue of concern, compared with 50,000 people in the audience the number wearing Ustashe shirts and other symbols was small. Primorac, who, contrary to press reports did not attend the concert, said that Thompson himself was not the problem; there will always be some people

who will take advantage of such fora, however, to express their views. He also said that he did not believe that most of those wearing Ustashe paraphernalia really understood the history behind the symbols; in any case, the views of this small nationalistic group should not be considered indicative of the perspective of Croatian youth as a whole.

15. (SBU) Comment: Thompson calls himself a patriot rather than a nationalist. He has certainly moved away from the nationalist and even semi-fascist imagery he used in the 1990's, just as these sentiments have become less and less politically and socially acceptable in post-Tudjman Croatia. Some of his fans, however, seem unwilling or unable to distinguish between Ustashe "Chic" and the historical realities that their style of rebellion and clothing represent. The number of fans wearing T-shirts depicting alleged war criminal Ante Gotovina gives credence to the theory that fans were motivated more by a certain rebellious "patriotism" than fascism or anti-Semitism.

16. (SBU) The Thompson case became visible in public in 2003 when two of his concerts were banned in Amsterdam at the insistence of the Israeli Documentation Center (CIDI). Existing Croatian laws ban broadcasting contents which incite or spread national, racial or religious hatred, anti-Semitism or xenophobia. Thompson's planned concert was also banned in Sarajevo in May of this year.
BRADTKE